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THE MORAL ABSURDITY OF WAR.

BY REV. THOMAS DICK, L. L. D., SCOTLAND.

It is amazing, and, to me, almost unaccountable, that in the present age, which boasts of its science and civilization, and in countries where the majority of the inhabitants *profess* an attachment to the Christian religion and its principles and institutions—so many should be found not at all ashamed to avow themselves as the abettors and advocates of war. It is still more unaccountable that many of the ministers of the Gospel of Peace, either tacitly or directly, give their sanction to the execrable system of warfare. I well remember the time during our war with France, when, in almost every parish and every church, on the first day of the week, during a long succession of years, the following prayer was regularly presented to the Almighty :—"Go forth with our fleets and armies, and cover their heads in the day of battle. Grant them success in defending the rights of our beloved country, and send them home crowned with the laurels of victory," &c. The plain English of which was nothing short of this :—That the God of all the families of the earth, the *Benevolent* Ruler of the universe, would interpose his Almighty power to enable a depraved mass of our countrymen to slash, and mangle, and slaughter thousands and ten thousands of another nation, children of the same universal Parent, and send them to the eternal world in an unprepared condition, with their minds filled with rage and malignity, and their hands stained with blood, in order that we might raise shouts of triumph, and prepare fetes and illuminations on account of our having obtained the victory ; while ten thousands of widows and of orphans will mourn in sadness over such a triumph, till the remotest period of their existence. What a strange scene for angels and archangels to contemplate ! to behold beings of the same species, who ought to be united in the bonds of love and harmony, raging like tigers and demons, and accounting it their glory to hurl the instruments of death and destruction against each other, and to triumph in the number of the slain ! If war had never raged in our world, the idea of it would have excited the utmost horror and indignation in every mind ; and the fact that it has existed in every age and in every nation, will be an eternal disgrace to the human character in all worlds where it is known.—Independently of its inhumanity, atrocity, and contrariety to the principles of Christianity, there is an *absurdity* in warfare, as an arbiter of national disputes, which is a disgrace to beings endowed with rational faculties. It cannot determine, in national contests, on which side *justice* and *right* are to be found. It may determine which party has the greatest share of dexterity and physical force, just as a lion that vanquishes a tiger may determine that he is

the strongest of the two ; but it never can decide who has a right to a certain territory, or who has done or suffered wrong in any action that may have been committed. It is absurd and preposterous in a pecuniary and commercial point of view ; for, after millions of pounds or dollars are wasted, and hundreds of thousands of human beings sacrificed to the demon of war, every thing generally returns, when the war has ceased, to nearly the same state as when it commenced, with this dismal exception, that thousands of immortal beings have been wickedly slaughtered, and prematurely hurried into eternity, and millions of money spent, which might have been instrumental in propagating the Gospel of Peace, and promoting the regeneration of the world. Can anything be more glaringly inconsistent in beings endowed with moral powers and the faculty of reason ?

I blush for my countrymen and for yours, when I call to mind what has lately passed respecting the territory of *Oregon*—a territory which, of right, belongs to neither country, and which neither Britain nor the U. States have the least occasion for occupying. America has more territory than it can occupy for a century to come, and Britain has more colonies than she can well manage, and neither the one nor the other has yet asked the natives of Oregon for permission to settle in that region, or offered a compensation for the land they wish to occupy. Yet both nations are loud in their demands for war, if the disputes which have arisen be not otherwise settled. In the British Senate, it was announced by the Prime Minister that they were prepared to assert their rights by physical force, and the sentiment was responded to by the instantaneous applause of the assembly of senators ; and I am sorry to see that similar sentiments prevail on your side of the Atlantic. It is strange indeed, that for the sake of a few miles of wilderness, at thousands of miles distance, for which they have no use, and to which they have no natural right, they should think of throwing away millions of pounds and slaughtering thousands of men. Even to *talk* of war, in such a case, is to me a plain proof, notwithstanding our boasted civilization, that, as nations, we are still in a state of *semi-barbarism*. For what more can the most barbarous tribes do than engage in ferocious warfare to decide their disputes ? In this point of view, we may apply the words of inspiration, “The hearts of the sons of men are full of evil, and MADNESS is in their hearts while they live.” For I know not a greater piece of folly and madness than the madness of war. But, according to the declarations of ancient prophecy, we are encouraged to look forward with confidence to that period, when “wars shall cease to the ends of the earth,” and when the nations “shall delight themselves in an abundant peace.” May the God of mercy hasten it in his time.

Broughty Ferry, near Dundee, 1845.